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ABSTRACT

This evaluation report profiles Academics 2000: First Things First, the Texas initiative under the Goals 2000 Educate America Act to raise the level of academic achievement of all Texas students by ensuring that each child achieves fourth-grade mastery of the foundation subjects by the end of fourth grade. The report states that, at the local level, the Academics 2000 initiative provides communities with opportunities to design educational programs to promote reading achievement among their students. It explains that Academics 2000 funding is provided for planning and implementation of initiatives to improve reading, including intensive and sustained professional development in research-based instructional strategies and methodologies, and in addition, funding is provided for preservice education to provide early childhood and elementary educators with skills and knowledge to foster reading achievement among all students. Following an introduction and evaluation methodology, the report is divided into these broad sections: Summary of District Academics 2000 Grant Programs for 1998-99; and Individual Academics 2000 Grant Program (Allan and Brooke Elementary Schools; Barrington, Ortega and Zavala Elementary Schools; Cooke and Wooldridge Elementary Schools; Dawson Elementary School; Dyslexia Support Grant Campuses; Harris Elementary School; Maplewood and Summit Elementary Schools; Mathews Elementary School; Palm and Widen Elementary Schools; Primary Education Grant Campuses; and Travis Heights Elementary School). (Contains 14 figures.) (NKA)

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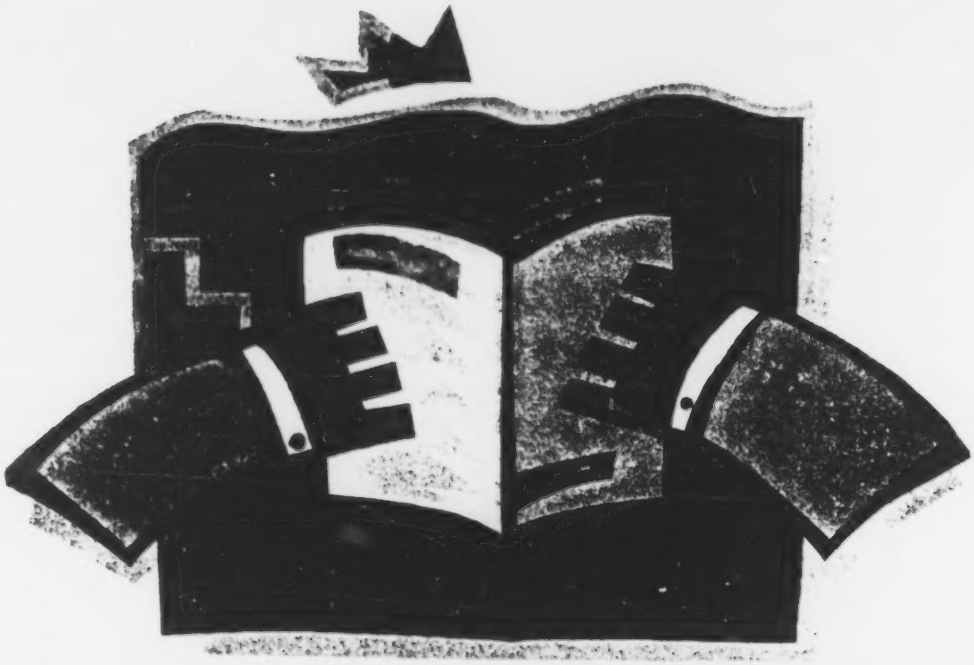
Academics 2000: First Things First
Evaluation Report, 1998-99



Austin Independent School District
Office of Program Evaluation

June, 2000

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Executive Summary

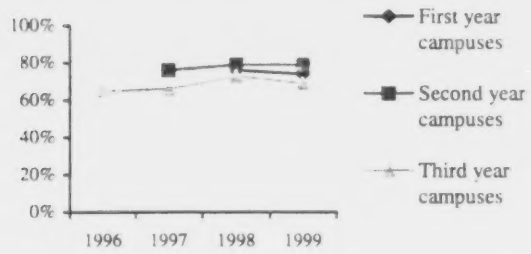
Academics 2000: First Things First is the Texas initiative under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (public law 103-227). The purpose of Academics 2000 is to raise the level of academic achievement of all Texas students by ensuring that each child achieves fourth grade mastery of the foundation subjects by the end of the fourth grade. At the local level, the Academics 2000 initiative provides communities with opportunities to design educational programs to promote reading achievement among their students. Academics 2000 funding is provided for planning and implementation of initiatives to improve reading, including intensive and sustained professional development in research-based instructional strategies and methodologies. In addition, funding is provided for preservice education to provide early childhood and elementary educators with skills and knowledge to foster reading achievement among all students.

Campus and support staff from the Austin Independent School District (AISD) began applying for Academics 2000 grants for the 1996-97 school year. Some campuses applied independently, some campuses submitted joint proposals along with one or more other campuses, and some district support staff submitted proposals that included large numbers of campuses. During 1996-97, AISD received 7 Academics 2000 grants totaling $839,209; during 1997-98, AISD received 8 Academics 2000 grants totaling $737,447; during 1998-99, AISD received 11 Academics 2000 grants totaling $1,239,723. Of the 1998-99 awards, three were first year grants: 1) Maplewood and Summitt, 2) Mathews, and 3) Primary Education, which included twenty-three campuses (i.e., Blackshear, Govalle, Houston, Jordan, Allison, Winn, Sims, Sanchez, Linder, Blanton, Becker, Andrews, Pecan Springs, Wooten, Hart, Reilly, Langford, St. Elmo, Galindo, Graham, Joslin, Pleasant Hill and Odom). One was a second year continuation: 1) Dawson. Seven were third year continuations: 1) Allan and Brooke; 2) Barrington, Ortega and Zavala; 3) Cook and Wooldridge; 4) Dyslexia Support, which included four campuses (i.e., Blackshear, Govalle, Jordan and Oak Springs/Rice); 5) Harris; 6) Palm and Widen and 7) Travis Heights.

At the end of the funding year, recipients of Academics 2000 grants were required to submit completed evaluation reports to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Generally, recipients were asked to describe major program activities, overall evaluation results, future program plans and performance indicators used in evaluating the effectiveness of major activities. Copies of the 1998-99 evaluation reports submitted to the TEA by AISD grant recipients were collected and summarized and are presented in this report.

- As a result of the evaluation efforts, it was determined that the district's Academics 2000 grant programs served 42 campuses, 9,588 students 801, teachers, 16 preservice educators, 54 administrators, 32 other staff members and 7,185 parents.
- As shown in the figure on the following page, for the three first year Academics 2000 campuses, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading decreased from 76% to 74% between 1998 and 1999; for the second year campus, the percentage increased from 76% to 79% between 1997 and 1999; for the seven third year campuses, the percentage increased from 65% to 73% between 1996 and 1998 and decreased from 73% to 69% between 1998 and 1999.

Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at First, Second, and Third Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1998-99



- Consistent TAAS Reading score increases were *not* observed, with one exception: Dyslexia Support. TAAS Reading scores of students at Dyslexia Support campuses increased from 42% to 59% between 1996 and 1999. TAAS Reading scores are presented for each program in the individual program sections of the evaluation report.
- Grant recipients selected one or more performance indicators with which to evaluate the success of their programs. Principals and program administrators reported increases in student reading achievement on the basis of Reading Recovery Levels, Informal Reading Inventories, TAAS practice tests, Concepts About Print, Letter Identification, running records, the Developmental Reading Assessment, and the amount of time students spent reading. In addition, principals reported improved classroom instruction on the basis of principal observations, teacher scores on a locally developed teacher appraisal instrument, teacher pre- and post-tests, and teacher interviews. Information regarding specific performance indicators is presented for each program in the individual program sections of the evaluation report.
- AISD staff participated in a variety of Academics 2000-funded activities to ensure that all students read on grade level by the end of the fourth grade. Teachers used reading strategies including guided reading, paired reading, shared reading, flexible grouping and literature circles. Reading programs were implemented, including Helping One Student to Succeed, Project Read, and Reading Recovery. Other activities included implementing literacy centers, purchasing leveled readers, and establishing literacy libraries. Additional activities included TAAS camp, literacy support groups and literacy software. Parents, literacy specialists, and volunteers from the community worked with students. Parental involvement was emphasized; staff at many campuses hosted family literacy events, implemented home literacy programs and provided training for parents. Ongoing assessment, including the Primary Assessment of Language Arts and Mathematics, was emphasized.
- Every Academics 2000 program had a staff development component. Staff development activities included graduate-level courses in literacy and technology, TAAS analysis workshops and national literacy conferences. In addition, some staff participated in training in Breakthrough to Literacy, Reading Styles, Reading Recovery, Literacy Backbone, curriculum alignment, assessment and technology. Staff members were encouraged to observe in other classrooms and at other campuses. Teachers met to discuss literacy issues, received coaching and feedback from trainers and had opportunities to reflect on their practices.

- Staff from AISD Academics 2000 programs reported a number of successes and challenges associated with implementation during 1998-99. Many reported that the grant program changed the way teachers and administrators think about and approach early literacy. In addition, the development, implementation and maintenance of a coherent and integrated approach to student literacy was cited as an important accomplishment. Other major successes included the following: teachers gained knowledge and understanding regarding ongoing assessment and using results to plan instruction to meet individual student needs; literacy centers were established in many classrooms; the importance of developmentally appropriate texts led to the establishment of literacy libraries on each campus; parent involvement increased; campuses received much-needed literacy materials.
- Staffing issues proved problematic for staff of several of the district's Academics 2000 programs. Grant administrators struggled to find qualified applicants to fill staff positions, and mentors were frequently unable to return each year. Other challenges reported included resistance to change, staff turnover, paperwork demands and budget delays.
- After Academics 2000 funding has ended, in 2000 or 2001 depending on the cycle of each grant, some program activities will continue through other funding sources (e.g., Title I, ExceL, other local funds). Staff at several campuses plan to continue their collaborative partnerships with outside organizations that began as part of their Academics 2000 programs. Because the emphasis of many of the district's Academics 2000 programs has been capacity building through staff development, coaching, observation, feedback and reflection, many of the programs' activities have become self-sustaining (e.g., implementation of balanced literacy activities including literacy centers). Teachers at some campuses will continue to meet and discuss literacy issues to participate in staff development to develop capacity further.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents iv
List of Figures vi
Introduction 1
Evaluation Methodology 2
Summary of District Academics 2000 Grant Programs for 1998-99 3
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 3
Overall Evaluation of the Programs 3
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 4
The Future of the Programs 5
Individual Academics 2000 Grant Programs 6
Allan and Brooke Elementary Schools 6
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 6
Overall Evaluation of the Program 6
The Future of the Program 7
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 7
Barrington, Ortega and Zavala Elementary Schools 8
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 8
Overall Evaluation of the Program 8
The Future of the Program 8
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 9
Cook and Wooldridge Elementary Schools 9
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 9
Overall Evaluation of the Program 10
The Future of the Program 10
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 11
Dawson Elementary School 11
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 11
Overall Evaluation of the Program 12
The Future of the Program 13
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Above Activities 14
Dyslexia Support Grant Campuses 14
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 15
Overall Evaluation of the Program 16
The Future of the Program 17
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 17
Harris Elementary School 18
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 18
Overall Evaluation of the Program 19
The Future of the Program 20
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 21
Maplewood and Summitt Elementary Schools 21
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 21
Overall Evaluation of the Program 22
The Future of the Program 22
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 23

Mathews Elementary School 23
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 23
Overall Evaluation of the Program 24
The Future of the Program 25
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 25
Palm and Widen Elementary Schools 26
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 26
Evaluation of the Program 27
The Future of the Program 27
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Above Activities 28
Primary Education Grant Campuses 29
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 29
Evaluation of the Program 31
The Future of the Program 31
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 32
Travis Heights Elementary School 32
Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading 33
Evaluation of the Program 33
The Future of the Program 33
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities 33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at First Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1998-99 4
Figure 2: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Second Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1997-99 5
Figure 3: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Third Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1996-99 5
Figure 4: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Allan and Brooke, 1996-99 7
Figure 5: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Barrington, Ortega and Zavala, 1996-99 9
Figure 6: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Cook and Wooldridge, 1996-99 11
Figure 7: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Dawson, 1997-99 14
Figure 8: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Dyslexia Support Grant Campuses, 1996-99 17
Figure 9: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Harris, 1996-99 21
Figure 10: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Maplewood and Summitt, 1998-99 23
Figure 11: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Mathews, 1998-99 25
Figure 12: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Palm and Widen, 1996-99 28
Figure 13: Percentage Passing TAAS at Primary Education Grant Campuses, 1998-99 32
Figure 14: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Travis Heights, 1996-99 33

INTRODUCTION

Academics 2000: First Things First is the Texas initiative under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (public law 103-227). The purpose of Academics 2000 is to raise the level of academic achievement of all Texas students by ensuring that each child achieves fourth grade mastery of the foundation subjects by the end of the fourth grade. At the local level, the Academics 2000 initiative provides communities with opportunities to design educational programs to promote reading achievement among their students. Academics 2000 funding is provided for planning and implementation of initiatives to improve reading, including intensive and sustained professional development in research-based instructional strategies and methodologies. In addition, funding is provided for preservice education to provide early childhood and elementary educators with skills and knowledge to foster reading achievement among all students.

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EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

At the end of the funding year, recipients of Academics 2000 grants were required to submit completed evaluation reports to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Generally, recipients were asked to describe major program activities, overall evaluation results, future program plans and performance indicators used in evaluating the effectiveness of major activities. Copies of the 1998-99 evaluation reports submitted to the TEA by AISD grant recipients were collected and summarized and are presented in this report.

SUMMARY OF DISTRICT ACADEMICS 2000 GRANT PROGRAMS FOR 1998-99

Three grants were in the first year of funding; one was in the second year; seven were in the third year.

Total funding allocation:	$1,239,723	Total preservice educators served:	16
Total campuses served:	42	Total administrators served:	54
Total students served:	9,588	Total other staff served:	32
Total teachers served:	801	Total parents involved:	7,185

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

AISD staff participated in a variety of Academics 2000-funded activities to ensure that all students read on grade level by the end of the fourth grade. Teachers used reading strategies including guided reading, paired reading, shared reading, flexible grouping and literature circles. Reading programs were implemented, including Helping One Student to Succeed, Project Read, and Reading Recovery. Other activities included implementing literacy centers, purchasing leveled readers, and establishing literacy libraries. Additional activities included TAAS camp, literacy support groups and literacy software. Parents, literacy specialists, and volunteers from the community worked with students. Parental involvement was emphasized; staff at many campuses hosted family literacy events, implemented home literacy programs and provided training for parents. Ongoing assessment, including the Primary Assessment of Language Arts and Mathematics, was emphasized.

Every Academics 2000 program had a staff development component. Staff development activities included graduate-level courses in literacy and technology, TAAS analysis workshops and national literacy conferences. In addition, some staff participated in training in Breakthrough to Literacy, Reading Styles, Reading Recovery, Literacy Backbone, curriculum alignment, assessment and technology. Staff members were encouraged to observe in other classrooms and at other campuses. Teachers met to discuss literacy issues, received coaching and feedback from trainers and had opportunities to reflect on their practices.

Overall Evaluation of the Programs

Staff from AISD Academics 2000 programs reported a number of successes and challenges associated with implementation during 1998-99. Many reported that the grant program changed the way teachers and administrators think about and approach early literacy. In addition, the development, implementation and maintenance of a coherent and integrated approach to student literacy was cited as an important accomplishment. Other major successes included the following: teachers gained knowledge and understanding regarding ongoing assessment and using results to plan instruction to meet individual student needs; literacy centers were established in many classrooms; the importance of developmentally appropriate texts led to the establishment of literacy libraries on each campus; parent involvement increased; campuses received much-needed literacy materials.

Staffing issues proved problematic for staff of several of the district's Academics 2000 programs. Grant administrators struggled to find qualified applicants to fill staff positions, and mentors were frequently unable to return each year. Other challenges reported included resistance to change, staff turnover, paperwork demands and budget delays.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

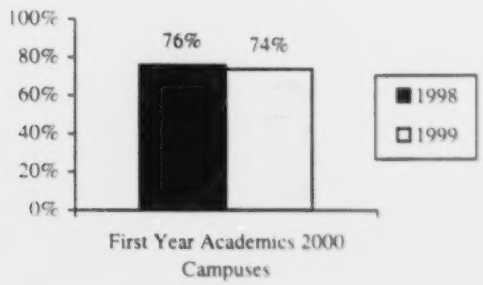
Grant recipients selected one or more performance indicators with which to evaluate the success of their programs. Principals and program administrators reported increases in student reading achievement on the basis of Reading Recovery Levels, Informal Reading Inventories, TAAS practice tests, Concepts About Print, Letter Identification, running records, the Developmental Reading Assessment, and the amount of time students spent reading. In addition, principals reported improved classroom instruction on the basis of principal observations, teacher scores on a locally developed teacher appraisal instrument, teacher pre- and post-tests, and teacher interviews. Information regarding specific performance indicators is presented for each program in the individual program sections of the evaluation report.

Finally, the TAAS Reading results were included in the final evaluation report for each program. Consistent TAAS Reading score increases were *not* observed, with one exception: Dyslexia Support. TAAS Reading scores of students at Dyslexia Support campuses increased from 42% to 59% between 1996 and 1999.

TAAS Reading pass rates for all of the Academics 2000 campuses, by grant year, are presented below and on the following pages starting with the year prior to the initial grant award and including each subsequent year. In addition, TAAS Reading results are presented for each grant program in the individual sections that follow. All TAAS data in this report were calculated on the basis of all students tested who received valid test scores for the TAAS Reading.

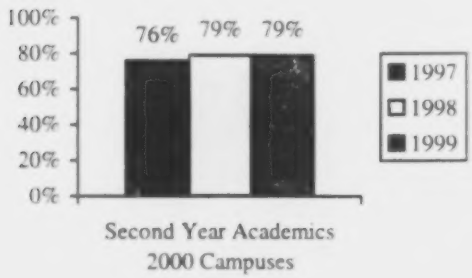
Increase in TAAS Reading Scores

Figure 1: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at First Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1998-99



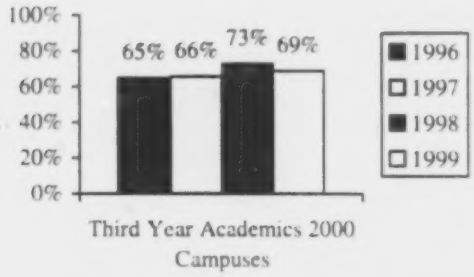
- For the three first year Academics 2000 campuses, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading decreased from 76% to 74% between 1998 and 1999.

Figure 2: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at
Second Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1997-99



- For the second year Academics 2000 campus, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading increased from 76% to 79% between 1997 and 1999.

Figure 3: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Third Year Academics 2000 Campuses, 1996-99



- For the seven third year Academics 2000 campuses, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading increased from 65% to 73% between 1996 and 1998; the percentage decreased from 73% to 69% between 1998 and 1999.

The Future of the Programs

After Academics 2000 funding has ended, some program activities will continue through other funding sources (e.g., Title I, ExceL, other local funds). Staff at several campuses plan to continue their collaborative partnerships with outside organizations that began as part of their Academics 2000 programs. Because the emphasis of many of the district's Academics 2000 programs has been capacity building through staff development, coaching, observation, feedback and reflection, many of the programs' activities have become self-sustaining (e.g., implementation of balanced literacy activities including literacy centers). Teachers at some

campuses will continue to meet and discuss literacy issues to participate in staff development to develop capacity further.

Individual Academics 2000 Grant Programs

Allan and Brooke Elementary Schools

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$60,000	Administrators served:	4
Students served:	695	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	65	Parents involved:	1,766

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

During 1998-99, Allan and Brooke Elementary Schools combined Academics 2000 funds with federal, state and local funds to purchase materials and equipment, support parental involvement and provide staff development.

Classroom computers were purchased, and existing technology, including classroom printers and scanners, were upgraded. Reading materials, including Accelerated Reader program materials, were purchased for leveled libraries. The libraries contain a variety of books, including big books that are suitable for guided reading groups in the classrooms. Teachers used the leveled libraries to identify appropriate reading materials for their students. In addition, teachers completed informal reading inventories and running records on students.

Parent workshops were attended by 370 parents and included "Literacy Night" and "TAAS Night for Parents." Staff purchased books and made them available for check out by parents and students through the Home Literacy Program in which 194 parents participated. Parent training was attended by 200 parents; 5 parents served as mentors/tutors; 247 parents served as volunteers; and 750 parents attended a speaker presentation.

A major success of the program was the collaboration with Southwest Texas State University Center for Teacher Preparation. Teachers welcomed interns into their classroom to work with students in large- and small-group settings. While the interns looked to the teachers for direction and inspiration, the teachers benefited from the innovative teaching ideas that the professors and interns shared with them. Administrators and teachers placed renewed emphasis on early literacy, including learning about recent research and best practices in reading instruction. Teachers became more knowledgeable about reading instruction and available reading materials. Teachers became more computer literate and constructed a web page.

Teachers and administrators participated in staff development in early literacy that included graduate courses in literacy and technology offered by Southwest Texas State University, other literacy instruction workshops and TAAS analysis workshops.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

The 3-year Academics 2000 program at Allan and Brooke changed the way administrators and teachers addressed student proficiency in reading. Teachers and

administrators placed a renewed emphasis on ongoing assessment of student proficiency in reading. Teachers became more aware of the importance of matching students with developmentally appropriate texts, and leveled libraries were established. Also as a result of the grant, teachers gained better access to computers for data collection and analysis.

The greatest challenge of the program was the decrease in funds available each year. In addition, initially, some teachers were reluctant to accept interns into their classrooms, but over the course of the grant, all of the teachers requested interns to be assigned to their classrooms.

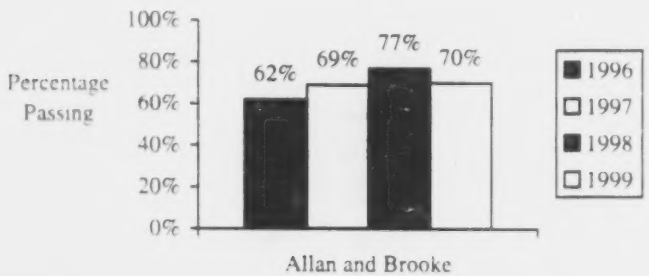
The Future of the Program

Although 1998-99 was the last year of Academics 2000 funding for Allan and Brooke, during the next two years, the campuses will use Title I, local and other funds to continue the literacy and technology initiatives they initiated through their Academics 2000 grant. Planning efforts will continue through development of action plans that support goals in their campus improvement plans and through their Campus Advisory Council meetings. In addition, staff at Allan and Brooke plan to continue their partnership with Southwest Texas State University by providing a lab site for student interns. Students at both campuses will benefit from small group instruction from the interns during the school day as well as from after-school tutorials. Finally, staff at Allan and Brooke plan to continue collaborating with each other on literacy projects as opportunities arise.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 4: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Allan and Brooke, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1998, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Allan and Brooke increased from 62% to 77%; between 1998 and 1999, the percentage decreased from 77% to 70%.

Staff Development

- Principal and/or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.

BARRINGTON, ORTEGA AND ZAVALA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$59,762	Administrators served:	2
Students served:	970	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	86	Parents involved:	800

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

During 1998-99, Barrington and Zavala remained active in the grant program, though Ortega chose not to participate. The program included Helping One Student to Succeed (HOSTS), Project Read, literacy circles, and the Primary Assessment of Language Arts and Math (PALM).

Staff at Barrington and Zavala collaborated to recruit mentors and worked with teachers to provide a smooth transition between reading programs and classroom activities. The majority of teachers received training in Project Read strategies and implemented them in their classrooms. Family nights were attended by 375 parents. Twenty parents attended parent training; 20 served as mentors; 50 served as volunteers. Twenty parents attended speaker presentations; 315 participated in the home reading program. Some staff members attended a national reading conference and training in HOSTS, Reading Recovery strategies, integrating reading in to science and math and curriculum alignment.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

The principals of Barrington and Zavala reported several indications of program success. For example, HOSTS was effective in increasing students' reading achievement, as evidenced by increased Reading TAAS scores. Literacy circles fostered students' achievement in literacy; an increased number of novels were used in the classrooms.

The 3-year grant program at Barrington, Ortega and Zavala allowed staff at the campuses to conduct more informed assessments of students' reading skills to allow for early intervention. Teachers kept running records and interpreted individual reading inventories.

The principals reported that the program's greatest success was the increased number of students reading on grade level due to the one-to-one mentoring they received. The greatest challenge was recruiting mentors who can return each year. Some of the mentors during 1998-99 were college students and their availability was limited.

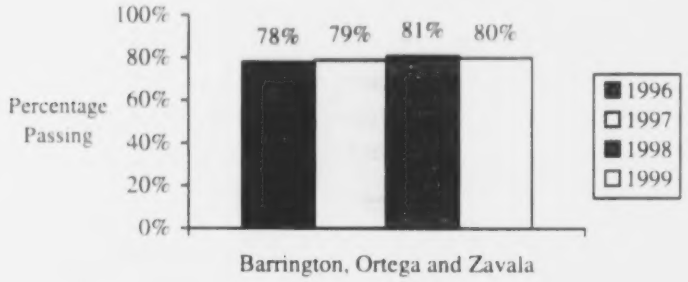
The Future of the Program

Staff at Barrington plan to use a new reading intervention program that will include a curriculum specialist and parent/community liaison, while staff at Zavala plan to continue with the HOSTS program funded through another grant. Staff at both campuses will continue diagnosing students' needs and creating individual student plans that may include Reading Recovery strategies, Electronic Bookshelf and Accelerated Reader. Literacy libraries will be established. Staff at Barrington and Zavala plan to continue their collaboration by sharing information on reading strategies.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 5: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Barrington, Ortega and Zavala, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1998, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Barrington, Ortega and Zavala remained fairly constant.

Staff Development

- Teacher scores on the teacher appraisal system indicated improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicated an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.

COOK AND WOOLDRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$55,772	Administrators served:	5
Students served:	1,528	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	72	Parents involved:	255

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

Staff planned a variety of reading activities and strategies to empower parents as the first teachers of their children. Parents were invited to observe Reading Recovery lessons with their children. Eighty–two parents participated in the Quail Creek Family Literacy Nights at the public library. In addition, basic computer literacy training was provided for parents. Fifty-two parents participated in computer training at the campuses and at the Region XIII Service Center. Grant staff reported that more parents explored opportunities to participate in computer training than in previous years. "It's All in the Bag," a book checkout program for families, continued during 1998-99. One hundred-twenty parents participated in family book checkout. According to grant staff, more parents from both campuses participated in the checkout program and visited the public library to attend the program than ever before. Staff provided at-risk first graders with

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Reading Recovery to improve their reading achievement. Finally, staff worked to provide a balanced reading program for the students.

Teachers attended 12 2-hour sessions of Literacy Backbone training. Teachers and one administrator received training, individually or in group sessions, on running records. Teachers and five administrators attended cross-grade level planning sessions to provide a continuum of a print-rich environment for students in grades pre-K through 4. Reading Recovery teachers attended six continuing contact sessions. Content mastery teachers attended three sessions of content mastery support group services. Teachers and one administrator attended 4 one-half-hour sessions to implement book clubs to support professional growth in teaching literacy. Internet/TENET training was provided on an as needed basis for two teachers and six parents. Staff members attended a Reading Recovery conference and other reading conferences.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

Teachers shifted their philosophies of how children learn to read and write, as reflected in their teacher strategies. Establishment of the professional library provided teachers with much needed support. Parents became more involved, learned literacy strategies, changed their expectations and learned to focus on their reading habits and how they influence their children's reading. In addition, the grant provided funds for and the district supported implementation of a balanced literacy program. As a result, both campuses have narrowed the achievement gap between student groups in TAAS Reading and Writing.

The greatest challenge of the grant was to maintain parent participation throughout the year and to have them return each new school year. Each year, participation in fall activities was greater than in activities during the spring.

For 1998-99, Wooldridge's Reading TAAS scores dropped, due partly to significant changes in campus demographics and staff turnover. However, staff at Woodridge have designed and implemented an action plan to address these changes, identify gaps and areas of need and target specific student groups.

The Future of the Program

The next two years of non-funded implementation will include broad-based panel meetings. The broad-based panel will meet twice a year to discuss grant activities and needs of both campuses. The parent training specialists at Cook and Wooldridge will collaborate to continue parent involvement activities on both campuses, integrating activities and using materials purchased through the grant. The specialists will facilitate the Quail Creek Family Literacy Nights at the public library. In addition, staff will continue to train parent volunteers and utilize them to conduct future parent meetings. Staff will conduct technology training for parents and staff to improve student reading and writing skills. Staff at Cook and Wooldridge will participate in the public television workshop to teach parents how to use television as a teaching tool. Both campuses will continue to offer the "It's All in the Bag" checkout program for parents, provide for Quail Creek Family Literacy Programs through the Campus Improvement Plan, and implement professional development in literacy. The professional library will be supported and enhanced. Collaborative opportunities with other community/campus groups will be explored.

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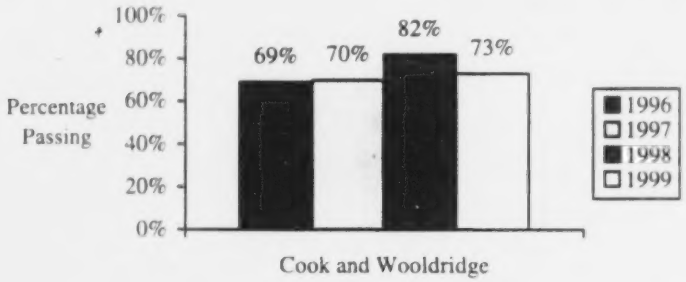
Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 6: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Cook and Wooldridge, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1998, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Cook and Wooldridge increased from 69% to 82%; between 1998 and 1999, the percentage decreased from 82% to 73%.

Reading Recovery Reading Levels

- According to the principal, average reading levels of students who received approximately 60 lessons increased from 1.2 to 9; average number of sight words increased from 1.1 to 15.2; average writing vocabulary increased from 9 to 43.3.

Staff Development

- Teachers scores on a locally developed appraisal instrument indicate improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.

DAWSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Second Year of funding

Funding allocation:	$105,000	Administrators served:	2
Students served:	431	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	38	Parents involved:	421

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

Pre-Kindergarten students participated in daily phonemic awareness activities. Literacy assistants worked in pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms to provide supervised literacy support for targeted students. According to the principal, students displayed more

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interest and involvement in literacy activities, and students with developmental delays made progress with direct support from the assistants. Staff implemented an early-morning, cross-age reading program. Pre-Kindergarten through third grade students and their families were invited to four literacy nights. More families attended the events than in previous years, according to the principal. In addition, there was increased participation in the school-wide at-home reading program. Breakthroughs, an emergent literacy software program for pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students was purchased and installed in early March.

Communities in Schools (CIS) and Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) were active partners of Dawson during 1998-99. CIS provided on-campus support for students through after-school homework clubs, individual and group counseling, provision of mentors and tutors, parent training, school attendance incentives and family literacy nights. The HIPPY program provided targeted Dawson families with in-home parent training designed to support literacy development, as well as the provision of actual materials to support literacy activities. The Pebble Project provided two eight-week sessions of parenting classes designed to promote a literacy-rich home environment.

Teachers, administrators, student teachers and parents attended a variety of staff development activities in literacy. Teachers attended the Literacy Teaching Institute, phonemic awareness and phonics workshops, a balanced literacy trainer of trainers workshop, Literacy Classrooms that Work, the Early Childhood Summit, the Reading Summit and an emergent literacy software trainer of trainers workshop. Teachers attended Foundations of Reading, a two-semester graduate level course at Southwest Texas State University, and conferences, such as the Rising Star Teachers' Writing Conference and the Early Literacy Conference. Teachers and administrators attended a TAAS analysis workshop and training in guided reading practices. Teachers, administrators, student teachers and parents attended Reading Strategies for at-risk students and early literacy training.

Finally, coordinated funds were used to support literacy activities. Title I funds were used to provide an additional Spanish language Reading Recovery (DLL) teacher to serve identified students in first grade and Kindergarten. Local funds were used to purchase additional books for both the leveled book and campus libraries, books for the at-home reading program, and classroom instructional materials. In addition, local funds provided substitutes for teachers to attend training in TEKS and curriculum alignment, as well as funding for an English language Reading Recovery teacher.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

The Academics 2000 program at Dawson changed the way student proficiency in reading is addressed in several ways. Student progress in reading is now monitored individually and continuously through running records, formal assessments, TAAS data, anecdotal data etc. Reading instruction is provided within a balanced literacy framework and individual student needs are addressed in order to maximize each student's reading performance. Appropriate leveled materials are used for instruction, and each teacher has access to multiple resources. A variety of extended learning opportunities, such as "early bird" readers, homework club, buddy reading and at-home reading, are in place to support literacy development.

The development, implementation and maintenance of a coherent, cohesive and integrated approach to student literacy has been the greatest success of the grant program, according to the principal. Prior to the Academics 2000 grant, there was no defined approach to reading instruction, minimal and variable individual student reading assessment, not enough focus on early literacy, a tremendous lack of instructional materials and few teachers with adequate training in literacy development. Another success of the program is the change in school culture toward focusing on individual and collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement in literacy.

According to the principal, there were challenges associated with the program as well. For example, the implementation of the wide-scale initiative was difficult because of the many changes involved. Staff members worked on multiple projects at once. In the first year, there was resistance to change and reluctance to accept individual responsibility. In addition, staff turnover necessitated repeating intensive professional development for novice teachers. Finally, the paperwork demands budget delays and complexities made a challenging program of school improvement even more difficult and frustrating.

The Future of the Program

Following the grant funding period, staff at Dawson plan to continue implementation of the program in a variety of ways. Staff members will continue to collect and evaluate data (e.g., individual student reading assessments, running records, PALM etc.) on student literacy development. The parent involvement representative and parent activities designed to strengthen the at-home support of literacy development will be continued using local funds. Ongoing professional development will continue to emphasize the implementation and maintenance of a school-wide balanced literacy model.

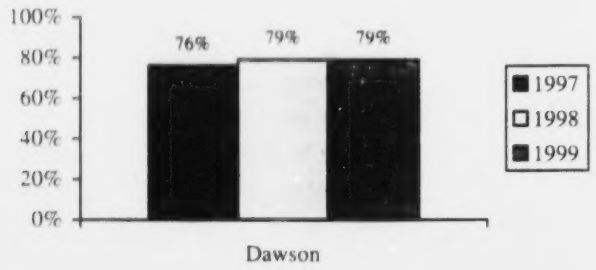
CIS will continue to be housed on the Dawson campus after the project period ends and will continue to provide most of the services currently provided. HIPPY will continue to serve as an off-campus resource for parent referral. The Pebble Project will continue to provide some parenting classes, although possibly less frequently than during the grant funding period.

In addition, a process for continued planning following the funding period has been put into place. All Dawson teachers participate in structured weekly team instructional planning and vertical curriculum alignment. The campus literacy cadre meets regularly to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the literacy initiatives. Campus-wide assessment of individual student progress in reading occurs at regular intervals throughout the school year. Teachers meet regularly with administrators to evaluate the progress of student groups and of individual students. Classroom instruction will continue to reflect best practices in literacy instruction and the at-home reading program will continue to strengthen family support for literacy development.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Above Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 7: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Dawson, 1997-99



- Between 1997 and 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Dawson increased from 76% to 79%.

Concepts About Print and Letter Identification

- According to the principal, over the past two years, there have been gains in the number of students able to succeed in letter and letter sound identification. Teacher anecdotal data also indicate that pre-Kindergarten students are beginning to write earlier in the year.

Reading Goals

- Approximately 50 students in grades 3 and 4 reached the goal of reading to pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students for 100 minutes; 48 students in grades 1 and 2 reached their goals.

Staff Development

- According to the principal, teacher scores on a locally developed appraisal instrument indicated improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicated an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.
- Teacher interviews indicated an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.

DYSLEXIA SUPPORT GRANT CAMPUSES

(Blackshear, Govalle, Jordan, Oak Springs, and Sims Elementary Schools)

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$51,200	Administrators served:	5
Students served:	81	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	5	Parents involved:	48

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

During 1998-99, leveled books were purchased, distributed and arranged in leveled libraries, easily accessible to students. According to the grant administrator, this was one of the most effective activities of the grant. The teachers recognized the need for leveled books and for knowing how to use them to increase the instructional and independent reading levels of their students. The amount of reading done by students increased as did their enthusiasm for reading when books they could read were available.

Running records were completed weekly on all students below grade level in reading, and the results were used to design and implement instructional interventions. Teachers became proficient and knowledgeable about the benefits of frequent assessment and designed instruction based on demonstrated student needs. In addition, the Developmental Reading Assessment was administered pre- and post-test.

Consultation with teachers regarding individual students occurred frequently; monthly support meetings with teachers to discuss instruction and student achievement were conducted. Teachers implemented suggested interventions, began to seek new information and became confident trying new strategies. Teacher dialog was helpful for all, and teachers often tried the ideas their colleagues suggested. For example, all teachers set up centers, a new concept for four of the five teachers.

Parent Literacy nights were provided. Parents who attended were enthusiastic about information they received. The meetings were effective, and relevant materials were prepared, including packs of books and activities for parents to use at home with their children. However, at four of the five schools, efforts to involve large numbers of parents were not successful because the project did not begin until the second semester and it was difficult to establish a new expectation for parent involvement if such a norm did not already exist on the campus. An expectation of frequent communication with parents was not established on four of the five campuses. Lack of parent involvement was an ongoing challenge on the campuses.

Five teachers and the teacher leader participated in staff development activities including balanced literacy training, cognitive coaching, Rigby Books, bi-monthly support meetings, weekly half-day classroom modeling and coaching sessions, training in running records and PALM training. Four administrators and the teacher leader participated in a balanced literacy overview for staff at Govalle and Oak Springs. Three parents and the teacher leader participated in a parent support group for struggling readers.

Several of the proposed activities were not completed. Three teachers, rather than five as planned, attended training in cognitive coaching; the other two did not attend. Also, cognitive coaching occurred between the lead teacher and the trained teachers. However, the trained teachers did not reach the point of coaching other teachers on their campuses. Finally, 5 teachers, rather than 10 as planned, received intensive training and support in balanced literacy, because the project was implemented for one semester only.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

This 3-year grant program changed the way the participating campuses addressed student proficiency in reading in several ways. The need for ongoing support of classroom teachers in their classrooms was made clear. Therefore, the District's professional development model will include more classroom-based follow up and consultation. The importance of having a wide variety of leveled books was evident. Most schools do not have an adequate number of appropriate books available for students. When appropriate books are accessible, students read more. The District will continue to encourage frequent, ongoing reading assessments of all students, with an emphasis on identifying young children who are struggling learning to read. Increased emphasis on early identification of students with disabilities will continue. Training in strategies to address the needs of identified students will be ongoing. Strategies teachers can incorporate into their general education classroom curriculum that support students with special needs, such as Project Read strategies, will continue to be offered.

The grant administrator reported that the 3-year program had several successes. For example, a model for training and supporting teachers was developed and capacity was built (i.e., a person was well trained in balanced literacy and interventions for at-risk students) at three campuses. Materials were made available at all campuses; teachers were taught how to use the leveled books and how to modify for struggling readers. Approximately 200 teachers and 6 administrators were trained in multisensory strategies to support students with dyslexia and other learning differences in learning to read within the general education classroom. Preservice teachers were trained in multisensory strategies to support students with reading disabilities the first two years of the grant. Teachers and administrators acquired awareness of how to teach young children to read and how to identify those students who have difficulty learning to read because of dyslexia or a related disorder.

The program also faced several challenges over the 3-year funding period. The Rawson-Saunders School, St. Andrew's Episcopal School, and the Healthcare Rehabilitation Center (Brown Schools) were all collaborative partners in this Academics 2000 program. However, during 1998-99, their participation was limited to a few teachers attending Project Read training. Although an effort was made to include local private schools in the grant program, participation was minimal. However, new partnerships were formed between the participating elementary schools, which enabled them to work together to promote reading proficiency.

The Austin Independent School District plans to strengthen its partnership with local universities and to participate more in joint research activities and preservice education. Several joint projects to enhance reading achievement have been initiated with the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, College of Education, at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition, teachers from other school districts as well as private schools continue to be invited to attend various district professional development opportunities at no charge.

Because of district constraints, the teacher leader/grant coordinator was hired in January, 1999. Pretesting and the purchase of materials occurred in the fall, but implementation of the major activities in the grant program began in February, 1999. The initiative would have been more successful if it had begun at the beginning of the school year.

Classroom teachers were selected by principals because of their need to learn basic teaching and management skills. Although the best teachers, capable of sharing the strategies with other teachers, were requested, principals took advantage of the benefits of this model of intense professional development to strengthen the skills of the most needy teachers. Consequently, the teachers selected had neither the skills nor the desire to work as trainers on their campuses.

The Future of the Program

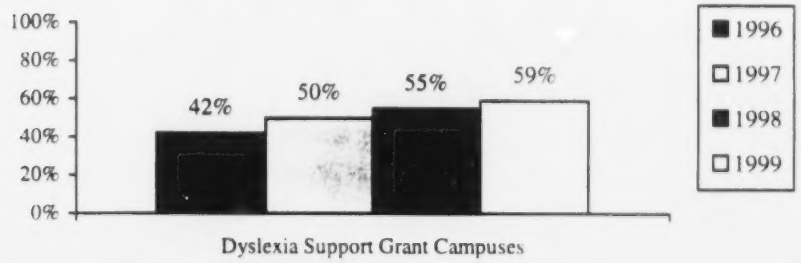
Staff will work to increase parent participation through outreach efforts with such organizations as churches, community organizations and employers. Staff will concentrate on one high need school, grades pre-Kindergarten through 5, to develop a literacy model that ensures successful reading achievement for all students. The lead teacher from the grant program has been assigned to Govalle Elementary as a curriculum specialist, concentrating on reading and professional development. Staff will continue to support teachers in the implementation of a balanced literacy model, providing explicit instruction to students based on ongoing assessment.

Administrators (i.e., campus principals, area superintendents, curriculum specialists) will continue to monitor the progress of the students and implement instructional interventions as required. Training in balanced literacy, interventions for at-risk students and ongoing assessment will continue. Collaboration with the University of Texas, College of Education, Texas Center of Reading and Language Arts, will continue, with an emphasis on planning effective instructional and grouping practices for students in the second grade.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 8: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Dyslexia Support Grant Campuses, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Blackshear, Govalle, Jordan, Oak Springs/Rice and Sims increased from 42% to 59%.

Running Records

- The grant administrator indicated that running records were completed and demonstrated the achievement of the students.

Developmental Reading Assessment

- The average DRA level of second grade students tested increased from 16.5 to 22.6 between August and April. On the basis of the grade level equivalents associated with each DRA level, 36% of second grade students tested were reading at the second grade level or higher in August; 57% of students were reading at the second grade level or higher in April.

Staff Development

- Teacher scores on a locally developed appraisal instrument indicate improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal and supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.
- Pre- and post-test scores on a measure of teacher knowledge about teaching early literacy skills indicate increased knowledge.
- "Stages of Concern" responses completed by teachers at designated points in the implementation cycle indicate concern for student achievement.
- Record of teacher discussion of knowledge and strategies acquired indicate increased discussion of effective strategies and plans to implement strategies.

HARRIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$40,116	Administrators served:	3
Students served:	754	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	66	Parents involved:	130

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

Staff administered reading inventories in September, 1998. Teachers identified students' appropriate reading levels and studied the inventory results vertically for grades pre-Kindergarten through 4. Areas of need and concern were noted and addressed during the year. Teachers identified appropriate literacy materials on the basis of the original assessment.

A school-wide home reading program was implemented. Teachers received training on program procedures. Families kept home literacy logs, and teachers checked the logs daily for parent signatures and gave stickers to the students as rewards. The Literacy Cadre reviewed the program in their monthly meetings, and input regarding the program was gathered from every grade level.

Seventy-two parents attended Literacy Night in fall of 1998. One-hundred eighty-five books were distributed at the event, which was held in conjunction with the Bilingual Parent Advisory Council. Communities in Schools helped to promote Family Literacy Night, and the Office of Bilingual Education produced and distributed the flyers. A spring Family Literacy Night was not held, however, due to a scheduling conflict.

Staff conducted an after-school TAAS camp for third through fifth grade students. Two hundred seventy-five students attended TAAS camp this year.

The Reading One-to-One tutorial program was not completed as planned, due to difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified tutors. Two qualified tutors dropped out because of their busy university schedules. Two tutors started in late January after the training and were frequently absent and/or late for their tutoring. In addition, the Accelerated Reader program was not completed due to the removal of the IBM computer lab. The classrooms were equipped with Macintosh computers and not networked for Accelerated Reader.

Teachers and three administrators participated in Literacy Backbone training, which consists of best practices for a balanced literacy program. Teachers participated in ADAPT training; participants learned to use Montessori materials for individualized language learning and task completion. Teachers and administrators studied the book, *Assertive Discipline*; staff read and discussed strategies for working with challenging students. A consultant from the Region XIII Education Service Center conducted classroom observations and interviews.

Harris' collaborative partners, CIS, Aspire, the Office of Bilingual Education, and the Region XIII Service Center, were instrumental in supporting the literacy initiatives during the grant. ASPIRE was active in starting a book club for fifth grade students. However, the most significant contribution of the partnerships was in the area of parental involvement. The Literacy Cadre partnered with CIS to promote the literacy initiative and to reach out to parents and the community for support. Staff from the Office of Bilingual Education provided flyers in Spanish for Spanish-speaking parents. Staff from Region XIII provided follow-up visitations and clinical supervision to ensure that components of a balanced literacy program were implemented throughout the campus.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

According to the principal, Academics 2000 has helped restructure the way literacy is addressed at Harris. The intense training provided for the whole staff solidified the goals for literacy school wide. Staff collected data, creating a foundation and renewed awareness that initial assessment must take place to understand each student's literacy needs. The Literacy Cadre established the expectation that students would read and write daily and that teachers would extend and integrate literacy into all other content areas. Initial assessments (i.e., Individual Reading Inventories, running records and writing samples) helped identify students who needed literacy enrichment and who were eligible for early intervention programs (e.g., Reading Recovery and Reading One-to-One). According to the principal, the Literacy Cadre was instrumental in organizing the literacy initiative and ensuring that progress was made toward the goals in the Campus Improvement Plan.

The principal reported that the greatest success of the program was the steady improvement of reading scores in TAAS. Efforts to improve literacy take priority at Harris, and the curriculum specialist monitors the continuing success. Another success is the establishment of the Literacy Cadre whose work, according to the principal, has been superb. The Campus Improvement Plan is reflective of the professionalism and hard work of the cadre. Other successes have been in the area of individualized reading activities. A group of primary teachers met faithfully every other week to continue their training in Individualize Learning Activities.

Best practices were implemented in classrooms and discussed at grade level and general faculty meetings.

The greatest challenge of the program was turnover of staff. Continual training of new staff made progressing more difficult. In addition, the scarcity of certified bilingual and ESL teachers was problematic. In the past, students have been highly mobile, although the neighborhood has recently begun stabilizing.

The Future of the Program

With the implementation of PODER, a Title VII dual language program, "biliteracy" is a major goal at Harris. This first year of implementation, funds have been allocated for the acquisition of literacy materials in English and Spanish. Teachers attended training two weeks in June and one week in August to start implementation. The training included preparing the environment to allow students to develop pre-literacy skills in pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten and dual literacy skills in first through fifth grades. Planning and further training in language acquisition will be ongoing. Collaboration with the University of Texas is a component of the grant. Harris is currently in collaboration with Dr. Guerrero and his group of students to assist as tutors in literacy. Continued training for new teachers in balanced literacy, Frameworks and Literacy Backbone will be funded through the Excel Grant. Cross-grade peer tutoring is also a component that will be continued as part of the literacy initiative. Collegial peer observations have already been scheduled for this semester. Clinical supervision by Region XIII consultants to provide feedback for balanced literacy classrooms are in the process of being scheduled.

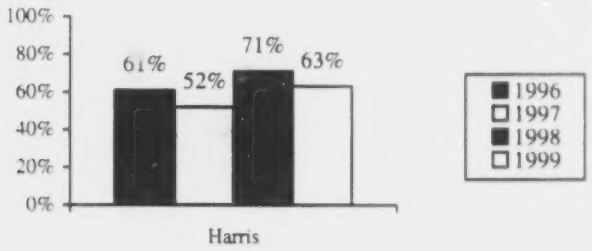
The Literacy Cadre, collaborating with the PODER Grant (i.e., dual language) personnel, will be the main planning entities for continued improvement in literacy as well as for setting goals for "biliteracy." An essential component of the PODER grant is the involvement of parent in the planning. The curriculum and assessment coordinator will work closely with these groups to make sure that TAAS objective are addressed in the implementation of literacy activities. Other groups in the Fine Arts department will be part of the planning in assisting the program and show casing literary accomplishment as enrichment.

The collaboration of the partnerships established during the implementation of the grant will continue to be a vital part of the literacy initiative at Harris. With the implementation of the PODER grant, this partnership will be even more evident. Plans to include the existing collaborative partners in parental involvement, as well as offer English as a Second Language and Spanish as a Second Language to the parents, are part of the initiative. Other partnerships with museums, dance, theater arts and authors are being established with the PODER (dual language) coordinator to assist in promoting biliteracy.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 9: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Harris, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1998, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Harris increased from 61% to 71%; between 1998 and 1999, the percentage decreased from 71% to 63%.

TAAS Practice Test/Reading TAAS

- Sixty-one percent of students passed the practice Reading TAAS; 63% passed the Reading TAAS.
- Twenty-one students received academic recognition in reading.

Staff Development

- Principal or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.

MAPLEWOOD AND SUMMITT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

First year of funding

Funding allocation:	$150,000	Administrators served:	2
Students served:	756	Preservice educators served:	4
Teachers served:	39	Parents involved:	45

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

Leveled libraries were established at Maplewood and Summitt during 1998-99. As a result, Maplewood has approximately 626 leveled titles available for guided reading in both English and Spanish; Summitt has approximately 645 titles. Two literacy support teachers administered pre- and post- assessments to Kindergarten through fourth grade students at both campuses. The literacy support teachers conducted small group sessions weekly. At-risk students who were not receiving content mastery instruction or who did not qualify for the literacy lab participated in the sessions. Materials were purchased to make all classrooms

equitable. Forty-five parents attended Literacy Nights that were held at both campuses; parents received informal training in implementing balanced literacy at home.

Staff at Maplewood combined Academics 2000 funds with Title I and local funds to purchase bilingual and leveled reading materials, training materials for parent and leadership training, literacy supplies for classrooms and professional development.

Teachers and administrators participated in a variety of staff development activities including articulation of grant vision, introduction to and analysis of running records, overview of balanced literacy, read-aloud and shard reading, guided reading, break-out sessions in best practices (one parent participated also), orientation to the leveled library and book studies. In addition, four teachers received 6 graduate hours for completing a balanced literacy course through Southwest Texas State University.

Several activities scheduled for implementation during 1998-99 were not completed. A teacher from another elementary school was to conduct staff development on the best practices of balanced literacy for staff at Maplewood and Summitt. However, because the teacher did not have the support of her principal, the staff development was cancelled. In addition, staff development on portfolios was presented late in the year, so portfolios will be a priority during 1999-2000. Parent lending libraries were not stocked as planned. While some materials were purchased for the parent lending libraries, the focus was more on the leveled libraries for the students. Finally, the literacy labs were discontinued for two reasons: first, local funding of the labs will end after 1999-2000; second, the Reading Recovery teacher provides literacy support. The materials from the labs were distributed to classroom teachers.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

According to the principals, all students maintained or exceeded their scores on pre- and post- literacy assessments. More teachers implemented literacy practices in their classrooms, and students had many opportunities to read independently with books on their level. Teachers became more aware of the importance of ongoing assessment and knowing the developmental levels of each child. More teachers became knowledgeable about running records. Finally, more teachers attended staff development than in previous years.

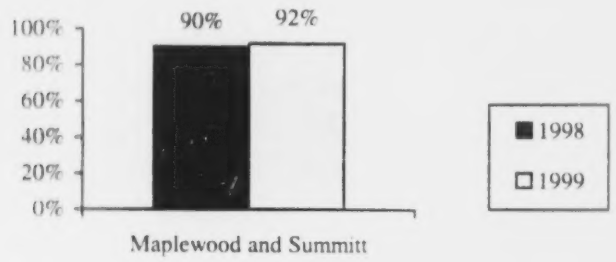
The Future of the Program

The future of the program will include ongoing staff development and support (i.e., building capacity of staff members), development of student and teacher portfolios, and expansion of the parent lending libraries.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 10: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Maplewood and Summitt, 1998-99



- Between 1998 and 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Maplewood and Summitt increased from 90% to 92%.

TAAS Practice Test

- Students at both campuses made an average gain of 12% for all objectives on an abbreviated version of Reading TAAS.

PALM

- Students at both campuses made average gains of 3 level in reading on pre- and post-assessments.

Staff Development

- Teacher scores on a locally developed appraisal instrument indicate improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction trough application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.

MATHEWS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

First year of funding

Funding allocation:	$124,040	Administrators served:	1
Students served:	250	Preservice educators served:	0
Teachers served:	27	Parents involved:	324

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

A half-time reading specialist worked with students in grades Kindergarten through 2 who demonstrated below grade level performance in literacy. The Developmental Reading

Assessment was purchased and administered to students in grades Kindergarten through 2 to establish baselines and a common tool for assessment. Students who participated in literacy support groups but who did not progress enough to be reading on grade level were referred to the SOAR program. Twenty students were referred to the SOAR program; 13 attended. Staff established a fully-equipped computer lab where students performing below expectations worked intensively on literacy skills. In addition a leveled reader and literature set library was established to provide a broad continuum of literature for grades pre-Kindergarten through 4. Parents received training in reading skills development and support. Staff at Mathews hosted their first ever Spring Family Literacy Night in May. Twenty parents attended; according to the principal, a fair percentage of these were parents of under-performing students. Contractors from the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts conducted a needs assessment of campus reading programs in April, shortly before the TAAS. The contractors observed at Mathews for 3 days of then wrote and presented a summary report, which included concrete recommendations for improvement. The assessors validated the existing plan to focus on balanced literacy and stressed the need to focus on specific areas, such as summarization.

Academics 2000 funds were coordinated with federal, state, local, and other funds to support the following: after-school enrichment, homework center, and computer lab (including bus, materials, incentives, and instructors); HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) home visits to teach parents how to work with preschoolers; creating a leveled reader and literature set library; revamping of computer lab (including new machines, software, a mural, and instructors); SOAR (Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading) for students in grades Kindergarten through 2 not on grade level in reading ability; and Saturday TAAS Camps for students in grades 3 though 6 in danger of not passing TAAS.

Two activities were not completed as planned. Delays in installing Accelerated Reader software prevented the Accelerated Reader consultant from conducting scheduled training. The consultant met instead with the librarian. Also, stereo earphones for computers were not purchased due to restrictions on possible purchases due to hygiene issues (i.e., lice).

Teachers attended a variety of staff development activities including the following: balanced literacy class at Southwest Texas State University, balanced literacy trainer of trainers sessions, Stephen Krashen workshop for ESL/Second Language Acquisition, International Reading Association Conference, Big Six Research Technique Workshop, What's New in Children's Literature? and Capital City Writes Follow-Up: Grammar. Teachers and one administrator attended the 3-week Capital City Writes Summer Institute, and training in professional literature on literacy. Teachers, one administrator and one parent attended training in guided reading.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

According to the principal, staff at Mathews have transformed the campus from resource-poor to resource-rich, particularly in the areas of technology, literacy material, and professional development, with many options for students and teachers. The transformation is due, in part, to careful planning achieved on the Academics 2000 plan. Communication with parents is more specific and concrete, and faculty members participate in shared conversations

about literacy practices. The Literacy Specialist and new reading materials proved even more effective than anticipated.

Mathew's collaborating partners, Just for the kids and the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, provided staff with useful contacts and suggestions for excellent resources. After the first year of implementation, baseline literacy data for grades K-2 have been collected; baseline literacy data for grades 3-4 will be collected during 1999-2000, as a result of recommendations by consultants from the Center for Reading and Language Arts. The needs assessment, in particular, helped staff to focus on specific weaknesses, which they will address over the next 2 years.

According to the principal, Academics 2000 funds were not made available until after January 1, 1999. Therefore, plans had to be truncated to fit the half-year that remained. Similarly, the software and hardware orders did not get delivered until late in the school year, and staffing has sometimes been problematic.

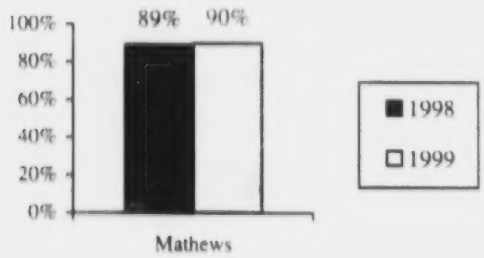
The Future of the Program

During 1999-2000, staff at Mathews will host two Literacy Nights, and parents will serve on the planning committee for the events. Staff members will continue to build a comprehensive balanced literacy program, with resources for all levels of readers in the school. All students will be monitored and periodically assessed, particularly those below grade level in literacy skills. Staff members will continue to receive staff development and professional literature to build expertise in literacy instruction.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 11: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Mathews, 1998-99



- Between 1998 and 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Mathews increased from 89% to 90%.

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)

- Eight students remained constant on the DRA between February and May.
- All students in the literacy support groups made gains on the DRA.
- All 13 students who attended the SOAR program made gains on the DRA.

Staff Development

- Teacher scores on a locally developed appraisal instrument indicate improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction trough application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.

PALM AND WIDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$52,833	Preservice educators served:	0
Students served:	1650	Other educators served:	20
Teachers served:	84	Parents involved:	750
Administrators served:	5		

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

The Breakthrough to Literacy program was piloted in five Kindergarten classrooms. Recorded books were used with all students, particularly with students not reading on grade level. Teachers established literacy centers that focused on students' different learning styles in every classroom. The centers were used to reinforce reading skills and fluency. Every teacher in grades 1 through 4 used guided reading strategies, paired reading, shared reading and flexible grouping. Also, some third and fourth grade teachers implemented literature circles strategies. Each third and fifth grade class adopted a younger class as part of the Students as Mentors initiative. Older students modeled reading and listened to younger children read. Participation was optional for the younger classes, and teachers were responsible for selecting classes with which to pair and for initiating and implementing the initiative throughout the year. Staff provided literacy training for parents; 50 parents attended training Reading with Your Child and 5 parents attended Recorded Books: Why and How?

Palm and Widen collaborated with Southwest Texas State University (SWTSU), the IRS Compliance Center and the St. Edward's University Mentors Program. SWTSU provided both schools with three preservice teachers each, and St. Edward's provided mentors to Widen. SWTSU teachers received training on reading strategies. The St. Edward's student mentors provided feedback to students and listened to them read daily. Staff at the IRS Compliance Center did not continue the literacy partnership, however, they did provide a limited number of tutors for the Helping One Student to Succeed mathematics program at Widen.

Academics 2000 funds were coordinated with federal, state, and local funds to purchase additional reading materials for fifth grade, special education, and the bilingual program; to pay for staff development for new staff, parents, and fifth grade teachers; to purchase computers to support the Breakthrough to Literacy program; to provide intersession classes to continue the reading inititative; to provide material and stipends for Reading Recovery teachers; to provide stipends for staff development attendees and presenters; to send staff to the National Reading Styles Conference and other Reading Workshops; to purchase reading materials for centers, to provide refreshments for staff development sessions; and to pay for consultant fees and travel.

Teachers and administrators attended a variety of staff development activities including workshops on guided reading strategies and literature groups, interpreting running records and center management for reading centers; Capital City Writes; TAAS strategies with Reading Styles; Breakthrough to Literacy; and reading styles and bilingual conferences. Teachers, administrators and parents attended initial and follow-up training in Reading Styles.

Some activities were not implemented as planned. For example, because computer upgrading took longer than expected and the number of Kindergarten classrooms increased, full implementation of the Breakthrough to Literacy program did not take place. School visits to model schools were not completed due to a funding issue and because a majority of the staff had already visited or heard presentations at the national conference. Finally, an on-campus trainer for Reading Styles was not trained this year because Widen was not a Level II Model School until April, 1999.

Evaluation of the Program

The 3-year grant program changed the way staff at Palm and Widen address student proficiency in reading in several ways. As a result of the program, all teachers share a common language when communicating about reading, the reading process and best practices. Student reading is assessed in a uniform manner throughout the school. Staff focus on student strengths, and students take responsibility for conducting literature discussions and engaging in meaningful conversations about what they have read. Reading fluency has increased due to the recorded book strategy; many of the students needed an extra boost to increase their confidence and reinforce what they had learned. Special needs children are part of the regular reading program more often, and the physical environment is more child-centered and literacy-focused.

The program has had many successes. For example, parents gained understanding about reading at different grade levels and how they can help their children. Parents recorded books and listened to read backs at home. More interesting reading material was provided for students in pre-Kindergarten through fourth grade. Reading strategies were integrated across the curriculum. Teachers focused on what good readers do; they communicated and reinforced them with students. Teachers understood and used literacy centers.

There were also challenges associated with the program. Some staff members encountered difficulties in communicating the literacy strategies to all parents. In addition, new staff were hired, as a result of substantial campus growth, and required training every year. Some new teachers struggled with classroom management issues. Teacher turnover also contributed to below-expectation performance. Finally, some teachers did not fully implement the strategies.

The Future of the Program

During the next two years of non-funded implementation, selected teachers will provide an overview of the literacy strategies to new teachers. Local and Title I funds will be used to provide staff development for new staff, ongoing consultant visits and additional materials. Parents will continue receive training on recorded book process and read backs. Partnerships will continue with KLRU and Parents as Teachers to work with parents of children 5 years and younger. Widen, an National Reading Styles Institute (NSRI) Level II Model School, will have visits from other schools and is eligible to send a teacher to be a trainer. Widen will also receive

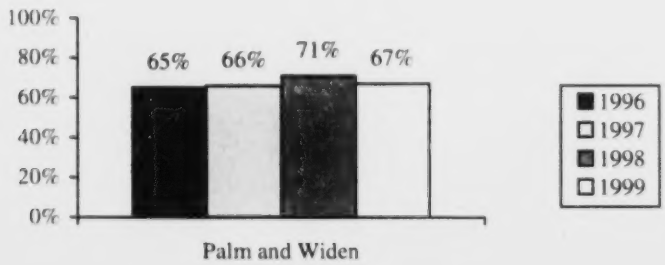
two free paid conference slots and can present at the national conference. Staff at Widen will strive to become a Level III Model School. Recorded books, guided reading, shared reading and interactive writing training will continue through staff development efforts by trained staff and district sessions.

The CACs at Palm and Widen support the initiatives and have made them part of the campus improvement plans. Staff at Palm and Widen have formed a cadre specifically focused on literacy/language arts. This cadre will continue to provide feedback to the principals and CACs about progress, research and best practices in balanced literacy.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Above Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 12: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Palm and Widen, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1998, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Palm and Widen increased from 65% to 71%; between 1998 and 1999, the percentage decreased from 71% to 67%.

Informal Reading Inventories and Running Records (IRI)

- Pre- and post- IRI scores indicated that students achieved grade level increases.
- Students demonstrated increases in reading fluency and comprehension on the IRIs and Running Records.

TAAS Scores

- The percentages of students, including African American, Hispanic, Low SES, and bilingual students, passing TAAS were higher in classrooms in which teachers had learned the literacy strategies well and implemented them on a consistent basis.

Discipline Referrals

- Discipline referrals were lower in classrooms in which teachers implemented effective literacy center strategies on a consistent basis.

Staff Development

- Teacher scores on a locally developed appraisal instrument indicate improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction through application.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction and increased application of knowledge and skills.
- Presentations made by staff members and evaluation visits by a NRSI evaluator indicate that the professional development activities of the Academics 2000 grant program have increased teachers' knowledge and skills, effective classroom instruction and student achievement.

PRIMARY EDUCATION GRANT CAMPUSES

(Allison, Andrews, Becker, Blackshear, Blanton, Galindo, Govalle, Graham, Hart, Houston, Jordan, Joslin, Langford, Linder, Odom, Pecan Springs, Pleasant Hill, Reilly, St. Elmo, Sanchez, Sims, Winn, and Wooten Elementary Schools)

First year of funding

Funding allocation:	$525,000	Preservice educators served:	2
Students served:	1840	Other educators served:	12
Teachers served:	109	Parents involved:	2,013
Administrators served:	23		

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

Teachers reviewed appropriate reading goals, observed and planned lessons with trainers, implemented lessons and received feedback in a systematic manner throughout the school year. In addition, teachers received knowledge, skills and materials to establish literacy-rich environments for the students in their classrooms, to provide instruction based on individual student needs, and to foster student achievement in literacy.

Grant trainers assisted teachers in understanding how literacy centers are different and necessary for pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms, gathering literacy materials and rearranging classrooms for management and small group instruction. The trainers loaned materials to teachers to help them understand the need for specific materials in literacy instruction. Teachers received materials for centers, including guided reading books, big books and big book easels, write and wipe boards, alphabet manipulatives, poetry charts, and songs on tape. Teachers made and used charts, poems and big books for read alouds, shared reading, and read around the room.

Literacy libraries were established through a process where grant trainers organized and labeled big books and leveled reading books complete with magazine holders and plastic bags for each set as a model for schools to emulate. Teams from schools including Reading Recovery teachers, other teachers, librarians, and administrators supported the labeling and organization of additional materials to the literacy libraries during the summer or made plans to do so during the 1999-2000 school year. Staffs at four campuses (i.e., Houston, Linder, Pecan Springs, and Reilly)

established literacy libraries with books provided through the grant. Staffs at eleven additional schools (i.e., Andrews, Becker, Blackshear, Blanton, Galindo, Govalle, Graham, Joslin, Sims, Winn and Wooten) created literacy libraries with books provided through the grant and bought additional books through other funding sources. Staffs at the eight remaining campuses (i.e., Allison, Hart, Jordan, Langford, Odom, Pleasant Hill, Sanchez and St. Elmo) had already established literacy libraries prior to 1998-99, but used grant funds to increase their collections.

Teachers learned assessment techniques for informally assessing students and planning literacy instruction for individual student needs. During reflection and planning time, teachers planned, practiced and reflected on lessons using literacy components in a safe and trusting environment.

Academics 2000 funds were coordinated with Title I, state and local funds to purchase books for literacy libraries; provide professional development, including sessions for pre-Kindergarten teachers not included in the grant; purchase books for classrooms; fund Reading Recovery teachers and Campus Language Arts Curriculum Specialists; provide substitutes for teachers visiting other classrooms and campuses; provide space, refreshments and materials for pre-K childcare workshops; and fund participation in the Kindergarten Linkage Program conducted by the Continuity Project.

Collaborative partners included The Continuity Project, KLRU, EvenStart, El Buen Pastor Child Development Center and the Ebenezer Child Development Center. Staff from the Continuity Project contributed two days of training for 75 grant trainers on early literacy research and practice, organized and implemented a diversity program to link 26 grant classrooms with 26 other classrooms through literacy activities, donated videotapes (in Spanish and English) on early literacy, presented at the Early childhood Summer Summit, served on the Early Childhood Task Force and served on the grant panel. Staff from KLRU instructed grant trainers in organizing and implementing parent literacy nights at participating schools, donated KLRU brochures for pre-Kindergarten students and 114 hard cover books for book bags and served on the grant panel. EvenStart staff participated in meetings for parent training specialists and teachers, modeled literacy practices, and served on the grant panel. Staff from the El Buen Pastor Child Development Center invited grant trainers to lunch to discuss their literacy training and to observe and read to their preschool students. Staff from the Ebenezer Child Development Center collaborated with grant trainers on parent literacy nights, observed in classrooms, shared information about which public schools children would attend and served on the grant panel.

Some activities were not completed as planned. Book bags with books were not distributed, because Half-Price Books did not donate 4,000 books, as they had committed. Rather, grant staff ordered books and book bags and assembled them at a workshop. In addition, a half-time clerk was not hired, partly because of a lack of qualified applicants. Instead, overtime was paid to the Primary Education Secretary for work completed for the grant.

Teachers and administrators attended a variety of staff development activities including professional development for grant trainers, full-day training, campus mini workshops, literacy centers workshops, classroom visitation, district-wide grade level meetings, a workshop to assemble backpacks with books, and district-wide literacy training day. Topics included, but were not limited to, guided reading, literacy backbone, literature circles, building a literacy

library, balanced literacy, interactive writing, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, and cognitive coaching.

Evaluation of the Program

Initial survey and observation results indicated that few teachers understood research-based literacy practices. Grant staff further assessed teachers' needs for knowledge and understanding of literacy practices using teacher interviews, teacher reflection sheets, observations and weekly records of discussions with teachers after demonstration and practice lessons. Trainers' notes and feedback from teachers indicated that teachers had varying levels of commitment to change.

Principal and teacher enthusiasm for the grant was evidenced through phone calls, notes and participation in activities to improve literacy practices. Trainers' records indicate about one-fourth of teachers asked trainers to assist them by working on weekends or after school to rearrange rooms for a literacy-rich environment. In the fall, principals volunteered to purchase literacy materials for non-grant teachers; in the winter and spring, principals hired substitute teachers to cover for teachers while they visited other classrooms, attended make-and-take workshops and participated in intensive planning sessions with the grant trainers.

Trainers' reports indicated that the appropriate literacy learning activities implemented resulted in increased student success and engagement in the 108 pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms. Teachers reported less disruptive center activity, more on-task literacy behavior, and more student success on lessons designed on the basis of individual needs. In addition, parents of students who would not have normally expected these early reading behaviors from their children reported their positive support of their children's learning. PALM scores from January 1999 and April 1999 show increases in students' literacy skills. At the end of the 1998-99 school year, teachers were asking trainers and supervisors if they could participate in the second year of the grant. Observations and comments made by 1999 summer school program teachers indicated increases in achievement beyond what was expected of summer school students.

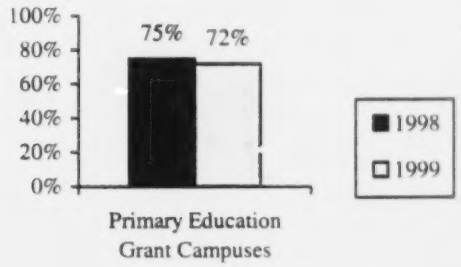
The Future of the Program

Grant staff will continue to implement activities to increase parental and preschool support for early literacy practices in cooperation with the collaborators. The trainers will continue work with teachers to assess student literacy. Assessment results will be used in planning instruction to meet the needs of individual students and for accountability purposes. Finally, staff will continue to implement ongoing, high quality professional development for primary grade levels, for campuses and for individuals, as needed.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 13: Percentage Passing TAAS at Primary Education Grant Campuses, 1998-99



- Between 1998 and 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Primary Education grant campuses decreased from 75% to 72%.

Attendance at district-level meetings

- The average attendance at the district level grade level meetings, which were held twice monthly for pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers, averaged 33 teachers per session.

Staff Development

- Teachers' scores on the Professional Development Appraisal system indicate improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal or supervisor observations indicate an increase in knowledge and skills and improvement in classroom instruction. Grant trainers observed changes in classroom teaching practices and in classroom arrangement and management.
- Teacher interviews indicate an increase in knowledge and skills, improvement in classroom instruction, and increased enthusiasm for student achievement. Teachers commented that they are looking forward to beginning the 1999-00 school year using these practices.
- An increased number of teachers used research-based literacy practices for their Professional Development System for Teacher Appraisal observation lessons for principals or other appraisers and received positive feedback from principals for these lessons.

TRAVIS HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Third year of funding

Funding allocation:	$16, 000	Administrators served:	2
Students served:	633	Preservice educators served:	10
Teachers served:	60	Parents involved:	No data

Major Activities to Increase Student Proficiency in Reading

Materials and supplies were ordered to support literacy in the classrooms in July, 1999. A parent training specialist was supposed to work with parents on literacy, however the specialist was never hired. The University of Texas, St. Edward's University and Communities in Schools were collaborative partners in the program. However, the partners were not active during the third year of the program, and the principal was unable to determine the nature of the collaboration in previous years, as no records were kept. The Partners in Education and PTA at Travis Heights donated money to purchase reading materials to implement balanced literacy initiatives. No staff development occurred during year 3 of the program.

Evaluation of the Program

Due to lack of information, data and evaluation by the previous administration, it is not possible to evaluate the program, according to the principal.

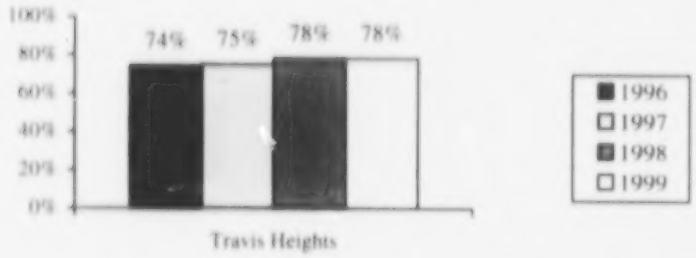
The Future of the Program

A literacy specialist has been funded by the district to implement balanced literacy and to train staff. Balanced literacy will be implemented on the campus as staff is trained and curriculum aligned. TAAS data are being used to determine areas of weakness. St. Edward's and Communities in Schools will provide tutors and mentors.

Performance Indicators to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Major Activities

TAAS Reading

Figure 14: Percentage Passing TAAS Reading at Travis Heights, 1996-99



- Between 1996 and 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS Reading at Travis Heights increased from 74% to 78%.

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